

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9542

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 4702

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT: IMPROVEMENT IN FRANCO'S CONDITION

REF: MADRID 4663

1. DR. MANUEL HIDALGO, DIRECTOR OF HOSPITAL, WHERE FRANCO IS UNDER TREATMENT, GAVE PRESS CONFERENCE AT 1100 JULY 23. HIDALGO SAID INTERNAL HEMORRHAGING WHICH CAUSED FRANCO TO HAND OVER HEADSHIP OF STATE TO PRINCE JUAN CARLOS JULY 19 HAD DISAPPEARED. SECONDLY, FRANCO WAS EATING AGAIN NORMALLY, AND TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION HIS MEDICAL HISTORY, COULD LEAVE HOSPITAL "WITHIN THE WEEK". THERE WAS ALSO GOOD PROGRESS IN PHLEBITIS AFFECTING VEINS IN FRANCO'S RIGHT LEG, ALTHOUGH HIDALGO ACKNOWLEDGED HE DID NOT KNOW HOW FAR THE THROMBO-PHLEBITIS REACHED. HE DID NOT CONSIDER IT DANGEROUS, HOWEVER, AND PROGNOSTICATED THAT IT WOULD EITHER DISSOLVE OR NEW LATERAL CHANNELS FOR BLOOD CIRCULATION WOULD TAKE CARE OF PROBLEM. ASKED BY CORRESPONDENT WHETHER FRANCO MIGHT ASSUME AGAIN HIS FUNCTIONS AS HEAD OF STATE FOLLOWING COMPLETE RECOVERY, HIDALGO SAID HE WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE
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SAME NORMAL MENTAL AND PHYSICAL LIFE AS BEFORE AND "FROM

MEDICAL POINT OF VIEW HE COULD ASSUME AGAIN THE FUNCTIONS OF CHIEF OF STATE" FOLLOWING CONCLUSION OF CONVALESCENCE.

2. LOCAL PRESS JULY 23 REPORTED THAT FRANCO HAD RECEIVED MANY VISITORS PRECEDING DAY. PRINCE JUAN CARLOS STAYED ALMOST AN HOUR. FRANCO'S WIFE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING "HIS VOICE IS NO LONGER SHAKY. HE SPEAKS WITH ENERGY". TV SET WAS PUT BACK IN HOSPITAL ROOM AGAIN. MEANWHILE, FRANCO WAS REPORTED AS HAVING WALKED UN-ASSISTED IN HOSPITAL ROOM. CARDINAL ENRIQUE TARRACON, WHO VISITED FRANCO THIS MORNING, TOLD PAPAL NUNCIO THERE HAD BEEN "REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT" IN FRANCO'S APPEARANCE.

3. CORTES HELD THIRD PLENARY SESSION OF LEGISLATIVE YEAR JULY 23 AND ALL MEMBERS GAVE STANDING OVATION TO PRESIDENT VALCARCEL'S BRIEF SPEECH EXPRESSING CHAMBERS' HOPE FRANCO WOULD RECOVER HIS HEALTH.

4. COMMENT. DR. HIDALGO'S ASSERTION THAT THROMBO-PHLEBITIS "DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE REALLY DANGEROUS" SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FOR BETTER IN THAT CONDITION SINCE SUNDAY WHEN IT WAS THOUGHT THAT URGENT SURGERY WAS NEEDED TO DEAL WITH IT. ALTERNATIVELY, IMPLICATION OF REMARKS IS THAT MEDICAL TEAM, HAVING BEEN FORCED TO WITHDRAW ANTI-COAGULANTS AND RELUCTANT TO UNDERTAKE SURGERY, HAVE DECIDED TO ADOPT POSITIVE VIEW OF FACT THAT ORIGINAL MEDICAL PROBLEM IS STILL UNRESOLVED AND TO LET NATURE TAKE ITS COURSE. RIVERO

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